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ABSTRACT

The workshops presented in this training manual identify methods and strategies that can be used by parents and professionals to improve the process of transition to public school for children with special needs and their families. Workshop participants develop the following competencies: (1) identify critical transitions for families with young special needs children; (2) summarize roles of the child, family, sending school, and receiving school in the transition process; (3) describe and discuss components of a transition model; (4) list and summarize local issues; and (5) design a community transition plan. The training workshops involve discussion, mini-lecture, large and small group activities, self-awareness activities, and audiovisual aids. Numerous handouts, overhead transparency originals, and supplemental materials are provided. These include a questionnaire on transition for administrators, teachers, and therapists; a questionnaire on transition for parents; types of transitions; sample timelines; an "overlapping circles" transition model; effectiveness indicators; and a facilitator's guide. (JDD)

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# TRANSITIONS TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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**PROJECT TA-KÓS**
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PROJECT TA-KÓS \ta kos\ *n.* (from a Coast Salish Indian term which suggests that any decision or course of action will affect seven generations) **1.** a family-centered curriculum for persons living or working with young children who are developmentally disabled. **2.** an inservice training model utilizing the curriculum, designed to impact present and future attitudes and actions.

Project Ta-kós is a special project of
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## TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SCHOOL FOR FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

*Purpose:* The transition to public school for young children with special needs requires planning and collaboration among parents and professionals. The primary purpose of these workshops is to identify methods and strategies that can be used by parents and professionals to build on existing skills and resources in order to improve the transition process for children and their families.

*Rationale:* For all families, periods of transition are inevitable. For families who have children with special needs, one significant transition is entry into public school. This particular change involves the child, the family, and staff from the sending school and the receiving. Everyone should have a personal investment in making it successful. Preparation through information sharing and strategic planning is the key element to a successful transition process.

*Narrative Of Content:* This is a step-by-step manual for parents and professionals (staff from sending and receiving schools) to learn about the transition process for young children with special needs into public school. Information included in the manual enables participants to go through self-awareness and knowledge acquisition activities; and, finally, to plan ways that can ensure success through the transition process.

*Competencies for Parents, Administrators, and Professionals:*

Participants can identify critical transitions for families with a young child who has special needs.

Participants can summarize roles of the child, family, sending and receiving school in the transition process.

Participants can describe and discuss the components of a transition model.

Participants can list and summarize local issues.

Participants can design a community transition plan.

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- Manderfield - Santa Fe, NM

La Vida de Valencia Preschool - Los Lunas, NM
New Vistas Early Childhood Program - Santa Fe, NM
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Zia Therapy Center - Alamogordo, NM

# TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SCHOOL FOR FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

## SECTION I: COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

## Developing the Coordinated Transition Plan Workshop

*What You Need:*

***Handouts:***

Questionnaire on Transitions for Parents
Questionnaire on Transitions for Administrators, Teachers and Therapists
Transitions
Transition Feedback Form
Sample Timelines (3)

***Overheads:***

Transitions
Transitions Feedback Form
Overlapping Circles
Child Circle (5 copies)
Parent Circle (5 copies)
Sending Circle (5 copies)
Receiving Circle (5 copies)
Best Outcome (example)
Best Outcome (blank)
Effectiveness Indicators
Timelines (3)
Rules of Controlled Brainstorming
Problem Solving

***Equipment and Materials:***

Overhead Projector
Screen
Flip Charts
Markers
Pencils
Blank Transparencies
Transparency Markers

***Supplemental Materials:***

Render, M., Krehbiel, R., & Sheldon, P. (1986). Transition: preschool to public school - helping children, parents, and teachers. (Available from Alta Mira Specialized Family Services; P.O. Box 7040, Albuquerque, NM 87194-7040).

Weinberg, N., Askew, L., Coleman, L., Holtzclaw, E. & Render, M. (1989). Transition to school: A Handbook for Parents. Available form Alta Mira Specialized Family Services; P.O. Box 7040, Albuquerque, NM 87194-7040.

McDonald, L., Kysela, G.M., Siebert P., McDonald, S. & Chambers, J. (1989). Parents perspectives: Transition to preschool. Teaching Exceptional Children 21 (1), 4-8.

Facilitator Guide

## GETTING READY

*Identify a local agency representative:*

Before developing a transition plan that is relevant to the community, it is vital to identify the needs and issues of the community, as well as the key players in the implementation of the plan. The politics of any community are so subtle that a local agency representative with a reputation for collaboration is needed to help organize the workshop. That one person may be the one who initially draws other agency representatives and parents to the workshop. The idea is to build the momentum so that each involved school, program, parent or agency has a personal commitment and investment into the transition plan.

> Call a local school principal or teachers, parent group, or other individuals you know in the community to learn who is well-known, respected and has a direct link with young children who are developmentally delayed.

*Establish community needs/issues:*

Discuss the transition issues with parent and professional representatives, either by phone or in person. Parent representatives should include those who have a child who will be moving into public school in the next year and those who transitioned during the past year. Professional input should represent every agency that is directly involved in the transition process (i.e. community programs, public schools, Head Start, regular preschools who consistently serve children with special needs). Interview individuals from sending and receiving schools/programs. Direct service staff (teachers, therapists, etc.), as well as school/program administrators should be interviewed. Sample questions are included on pages 20 - 21, Questionnaire on Transition for Administrators, Teachers, and Parents. After completing the interviews, compile the results and identify the needs and issues that relate to parents, administrators, direct service staff, etc. Look for issues that cross all the groups and issues that are particular to each group. Put all results on transparencies to be used later in workshop.

*Identify interagency and parent participants:*

Together with the local agency representative, identify the possible members for the workshop who will ultimately develop the community transition plan. An effective group consists of administrators, parents, direct service staff, and a Child Find representative. Try to get about half the participants from the sending schools and half from the receiving schools. If possible, keep the ratio of parents, administrators, and direct service staff close to equal.

Send a personal letter of invitation, from the local agency representative, to the suggested participants. If possible, have the invitation signed by a few key people -do what it takes to get the participants.

*Prepare for the day of the workshop:*

***Participants and Staff:***

* Confirm attendance. Be sure that staff trainers and agency liaison(s) understand their roles.

***Training Materials:***

* Adapt and/or review training content. Compile results of Questionnaire on Transition. Arrange material in the order you will be using it. Write down an outline of the topics and/or the points you want to cover.
* Check to be sure you have transparencies, charts, and other training tools.
* Copy and compile enough handouts for all participants.

***Equipment:***

* Make arrangements for using a meeting room(s).
* Make sure that you have an overhead projector and/or other audio/visual equipment that is needed. Bring an extension cord and extra batteries, bulbs, etc.
* Check the equipment and make sure it's working properly.

***Refreshments:***

* Make sure you serve something! Whatever you serve, have all the necessary ingredients and utensils (For example: coffee, coffeepot, cups, cream, sugar, spoons).

**Transition To Public School**
**For Families of**
**Young Children With Special Needs**

*Rationale:* Transition to school can be complex and emotionally charged for those involved: the child, family, and sending school staff (where child currently attends) and receiving school staff (where child will attend next year). Communities should establish a coordinated plan, addressing the local needs and using community resources. This coordinated effort enables everyone involved to have a part in making the change successful, lessening feelings of stress, and enhancing individual participants' personal sense of control over the situation. A coordinated transition plan supports communication among families and professionals, and facilitates easy access to services that are needed.

*Goal:* Participants, through joint collaboration, will develop a coordinated transition plan, relevant to the local resources and needs.

## TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
## FOR FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

### INTRODUCTION

**MINI-LECTURE:** We are all here to work together towards a common goal -- developing a community plan for helping young children with special needs and their families transition to new programs. Our roles, as facilitators, are **not** to give you the **answers** to your questions, but to help you **formulate** the **right questions**, and frame them in a way to **produce your own answers**.

All of you represent different aspects of the transition process, different "pieces" of the transition puzzle. We believe everyone here has experience with transition and expertise to share about this process. Therefore, we are here to learn from each other and understand each others' perspectives. We are **not** here to convince one another that **one way is the best way**. We will work together to **create a dialogue**, to **share information**, with each other, and to come to some **agreement** about your community transition plan -- what it is and how we begin to develop it.

**ACTIVITY:** **Workshop Expectations Activity**

Facilitator will lead participants in brainstorming activity to gather their expectations for this workshop. Ask: What are your expectations for this workshop? What do you hope to be addressed? (e.g. concerns, questions, interests)

Write responses on flipchart. Summarize answers. Indicate to participants what responses seem to fall within the scope of this workshop, which ones may need more information in order to address and which ones may be better addressed by other resources. Let participants know we will refer to these at the end of the workshop to see if expectations have been met.

**MINI-LECTURE:** During this workshop, we will help you better understand the impact of transition for the children, families and professionals involved. You will all be working together towards defining the issues and problems with the transition process as well as identifying the strategies for developing your community transition plan.

We believe this transition model helps create a dialogue among all of you who will develop and later implement the Community Transition Plan. Parents **and** professionals from all the programs in your community affected by transition to public school share their concerns, experiences, ideas and solutions. The **key** for any effort is creating an **environment for collaboration** with open and effective communication and the setting of mutual goals.

We will guide you through self-awareness activities, small and large group discussions, and brainstorming and problem-solving sessions which help you to define your transition plan. At the end of these two days, you will have the outline of a community plan and a framework for implementation for that transition plan.

**OBJECTIVE 1**

To explore the meaning and impact of transition.

**DISCUSSION**: Ask participants: "What does transition mean to you? How would you describe it?"

Facilitator summarizes answers. Answers should include concepts of change or moving from one place to another.

**MINI-LECTURE**: Everyone experiences change. Transition is that period when change occurs. According to Webster, transition is defined as a "passing from one condition to another." It can also be explained as a process that has an end. This passage is followed by a time of confusion and discomfort or distress, a "period of adjustment," leading to a new beginning.

Transitions are changes. They are normal. Some are big, others relatively small. Some are events (marriage, living in a foreign country) and others are more a "passage of time" (being a toddler or teenager). Sometimes they are anticipated (as having a baby, moving into adolescence); often they are a surprise (losing your job, becoming a grandmother). All transitions are adaptations to change.

**OVERHEAD**: Facilitator displays **overhead** of **Transitions**. Review definition and relate it to previous lecture and discussion of responses.

**ACTIVITY**: **Self-Awareness Activity on Transition**

Facilitator tells participants: "Consider the transition of moving. You decide to change jobs. You are moving to a new job that is in a slightly different field and the working conditions are changed."

During this transition (or anticipating this transition) think about this change and it's impact on your life and your family's and friend's lives:

What are you thinking about?
How do you feel?
How do you typically react (behave)?
What do others think?

**OVERHEAD AND HANDOUTS**

Facilitator shows **overhead** and gives **handout** of **Transition Feedback Form**. Then describe each of the sections.

In the "Thought" section, you will write what you think about the move. In the "Feeling" section put down how you feel about making this change. Under "Behavior" write what you would do preparing for the change, how you react to this type of situation. Finally, under "Other's Perceptions" describe how you think others will perceive or react to your decision to change jobs.

**ACTIVITY:**

"Now I want each of you to write your responses on these sheets, giving some thought to each of the sections. When you are finished we will come back as a group and share some of our answers."

Give participants about 10 minutes to complete handout. Then facilitator leads group in discussion by starting with her own responses (and responses of co-facilitator). Write these on OVERHEAD with different color markers. Solicit responses from several members of the group in each category and write down answers on OVERHEAD. Ask them if these responses are fairly typical of the way they react to changes.

Summarize answers. "Everybody transitions (or reacts to transitions) in a different way. Everyone has his own expectation of the possible impact of transitions which is based on an individual's experience, personality, etc. You may also notice that there is often consistency within each individual. While the changes differ, the way each person manages transition is usually the same. And your emotions and thoughts lead you to perform certain actions and behaviors."

This entire activity will take about 20-25 minutes.

**MINI-LECTURE:** We need to be aware that we each have our own experiences. We also need to recognize we do not experience transitions in isolation so we can't speak for how others perceive or manage transitions. However, we can try to understand the impact and reactions of these experiences. This gives us insight into the range of what is normal behavior for managing transitions. Sometimes we think we don't have expertise, but we all have a lot of experience about what works. We need to pay attention to this.

**DISCUSSION:** "Let's turn our attention to families with young children with special needs."

Ask participants:
"What are the kinds of transitions that parents of young children experience?"

Guide participants in discussion and summarize answers. Answers could include birth of other children, adjusting at home with baby, developmental milestones, babysitter, preschool, daycare, birth of other children and so on. Emphasize the range as well as commonality of these transitions.

Now ask: "What are the kinds of transitions that families of children with special needs experience?"

Guide participants in discussion. Responses should include hospitalization and rehospitalization, concern about/diagnosis of developmental/medical problems, entering therapy, going to school/intervention program earlier than expected, dealing with medical procedures, dealing with medical/educational professionals and so on. Add to answers generated from previous discussion.

Then ask: "What are your reactions to these responses? Is managing these transitions different for these families. How?"

Answers should reflect that these transitions may be more emotional or difficult because of the intensity of the event (diagnosis or hospitalization), they may be more complex (multiple handicaps or lack of financial resources/family support), they may be more frequent (consultations from many specialists), the timing of them differs from parent expectations (child isn't talking or is in a school at age 2), there may be many more kinds of transitions (evaluations, involvement in early intervention program, therapists, teachers, 3 & 4 year-old program). Summarize.

**OVERHEAD AND HANDOUTS** Facilitator displays **overhead** of **Transition** for families of young children with special needs. Facilitator may want to use marker and add responses to list. Give participants **handout** of same.

**MINI-LECTURE:** As we see from our list, families are really experts with transitions. However, for parents of young children with special needs, they may be managing transitions that are more complicated, that are more frequent, and that differ from their expectations about when they may happen. Through all of this, families also become experts about their children and their family. They know their concerns about the child with special needs and the impact on the family. They usually have a good sense of what they need.

For the family, this transition may be influenced by the success or failure of earlier transitions. This "school" experience may be perceived by the family as coming earlier or in a different form than expected (individual therapy, early intervention, public special education preschool). Finally, this transition is brought about because of a child's needs or weakness. Typically, children begin their school experience based on their strengths. They are "ready" (have the skills) to succeed in preschool or kindergarten. When children with special needs go to school, it is because they are delayed or are lacking in skills.

With this new transition, the family also has **more** decisions to make (what program, what kind of intervention, etc.), **more** work to do (testing, meetings, etc.), and **more** people with whom to meet and work (diagnosticians, teachers, therapists, administrators). This is a picture of what the transition to public school may look like for children with special needs and their families.

**OBJECTIVE 2**

To understand the Transition Model

**MINI-LECTURE:** This is why we developed a model to reflect what the impact of the transition to public school is like for the child and family. The child is really the focus of this transition.

Although this is true, sometimes the attention may actually be drawn away from the child. The school professionals need to attend to the administrative steps necessary to ensure a smooth entry into the new program. Parents and other family members may center their efforts on feelings about "letting go" of the child, their responsibilities as an advocate for their child, and legal issues related to this transition. As the adults involved identify and establish their roles, they may overlook the child's role. The child is the one who sets this process in motion. It is important that attention be given to her/his needs to make this change in programs successful.

**OVERHEAD:** Facilitator displays **overhead** of **Child Circle** as you talk.

**MINI-LECTURE:** The child is the pivotal reason for why the transition to public school is taking place. The families and staff of the receiving and sending agencies become the means for managing this transition.

**OVERHEAD:** Facilitator displays **overhead** of **Overlapping Circles** as you talk.

**MINI-LECTURE:** This model focuses not only on the roles of the child and family in this transition, but also the roles of the sending program (EI program, therapy) and receiving school (public school). This model is a way of viewing the roles of these "players", their interactions and collaborations, and their needs and the conflicts that arise when trying to meet those needs. Everyone involved has his/her own concerns and issues related to what is happening to them and to the child. With this information, you will then be better able to develop a community transition that is more responsive to all members of the community.

In a few minutes, you will all be involved in exploring the roles and the perspectives of these four groups: child, family, sending program, receiving school.

You will explore your thoughts and feelings about this transition and how you respond to this task. You will be able to discover what others think about this process as well.

**ACTIVITY:** **Roles and Needs Activity**

Facilitator tells participants:

"We want you to gather in four groups with equal distribution of parents, direct service personnel, administrators, and so on in each group." (Help them get into the groups.) Each group will discuss the impact of transition from each of the four perspectives (child, family, sending and receiving agency personnel). Choose a recorder to write down the responses. At each table, you have a circle (on overhead) of one of the four roles. Have someone from your group write the responses with the marker on that overhead."

"Ask yourself, if I am a child, what am I thinking or feeling about this change. How am I reacting to it? What are others' perceptions? (This is similar to the first activity.) You will ask yourself the same questions if you are looking at the parent perspective, or the views of the sending or receiving schools. When you are finished we will discuss these with the large group. You may want to choose a spokesperson from the group to comment on the answers."

"Remember, this is a brainstorming session, so all answers are appropriate. No response is discounted. You want to generate as many responses as you can. You have 20 minutes to do this."

When activity is completed, display each circle on overhead projector and summarize results. Point out similarities and differences among responses. Ask for additional reactions if appropriate.

"We will come back to these later to help us with strategies for developing the community plan."

**OBJECTIVE 3**

To identify local issues leading to development of outcomes

**MINI-LECTURE:** In order to develop a **Community Transition Plan**, we must have input from the community. From previous exercises, we have learned that everyone has different ideas about and responses to change and transitions. We need a way to solicit opinions and perspectives from the individuals who will be affected by the transition from Early Intervention programs to public school. Our way is to gather information through a **Questionnaire on Transition,** which is what you and others in your community completed before this workshop. We will all review the responses and add to this list in order to generate as many responses as we can.

**OVERHEAD:** Facilitator displays overheads made earlier summarizing the results of "**Questionnaire on Transition for Administrators, Teachers and Therapists**" and "**Questionnaire on Transition for Parents**".

**ACTIVITY:** **Key Issues Activity**

Facilitator asks group to review the questionnaire results and add to the responses if appropriate. Facilitator guides group through the brainstorming activity to elicit other issues or concerns related to Transition within the community. Facilitator may want to review "Rules of Brainstorming" with participants, page 49, to help structure activity. Facilitator adds to list on overhead if applicable. This activity will take about 10 minutes.

When brainstorming is completed, facilitator guides participants in grouping local issues into similar categories. For example: issues that relate to communication between parents and professionals, issues that address needs of child, concerns about assessment, eligibility and placement of the child. Facilitator will write these ideas ("Key Issues") on the flip chart to be used in next session.

Facilitator asks group to come to a consensus about the **Key Issues** that are identified from these lists. These issues will become the **BEST OUTCOMES** the Community Transition Plan will eventually address. Facilitator guides the group in the discussion of categories and summarizes the results. Facilitator writes these final statements on chart. This activity will take 20-30 minutes.

**OBJECTIVE 4**

To develop the Community Plan for Transition

**MINI-LECTURE:** From all these activities, you have generated ideas about the impact of transition on the participants in this process, and the needs and concerns identified by these individuals. In this next session we will put this all together to create a plan that will address the needs of your community.

Our next task is determining what is needed for developing the plan.

The first question we ask is "What is our objective? What do we want to accomplish?" We need to establish the goals or outcomes.

Now we must develop the **BEST OUTCOME** for this Community Transition Plan. From the list of **Key Issues**, you will draft a general statement that encompasses these concerns. This will be the Best Outcome. Here is an example of the issues one community identified and the Best Outcome statement that resulted from their collaboration.

**OVERHEAD:** Facilitator first displays **overhead** of examples of **Key Issues** and then the **Best Outcome** statement written by another community.

**ACTIVITY:** **Best Outcome Activity**

Facilitator reviews the Key Issues the participants have just identified. Then the facilitator guides them in discussion of what this comprehensive statement will look like. The facilitator helps participants clarify their ideas and the wording of the statement. The facilitator gets consensus from the group about the Best Outcome statement and writes statement on overhead. This is the goal the plan will address. This session should take about 30 minutes.

**MINI-LECTURE:** The next question we ask is "How can this be accomplished?" You will identify the strategies that address the outcome, and are responsive to the needs and concerns of the child, his family, the sending school staff and the receiving school staff. In a little while, you will also consider how you will know when the objectives are accomplished and what criteria will be used for evaluating the implementation of the plan. Another question is

"Who will be responsible for implementing the strategies?" The final questions to be answered are "How will the strategies be implemented?", and "What will the timeline look like?"

Now you will take time to develop the strategies that will help you reach your goal of a Community Transition Plan.

**ACTIVITY:** **Strategy Development Outline**

In this activity participants will brainstorm strategies on 3x5 cards. Divide participants into two work groups. Facilitator will give each group two of the four overheads they worked on in the Roles and Needs Activity. Each group should have 3x5 cards, and pens or pencils. Each group will generate strategies addressing the issues written on the overheads. The groups will work for 20-25 minutes and then each group will exchange their two circles with the other, and work for another 20-25 minutes. Facilitator will keep track of time.

Facilitator tells participants: "Each group will be given two of the overheads you filled out describing the impact of transition on the child, family, sending or receiving agencies (the circles). These are the problems you are going to address. Each group will brainstorm strategies that address these concerns. You will need one or two recorders to write each idea down on a separate card. Be as specific as you can. You will work on the issues listed on both overheads, and then you will switch your overheads with the other group. Remember, you are generating ideas and there is no censorship about the feasibility of implementing these strategies."

When participants are finished with this exercise, collect the cards and attach to a wall or blackboard where everyone can see them.

Facilitator tells participants: "We are now going to review the cards and evaluate the probability for implementing these ideas. In doing this activity, the group needs to come to an agreement about the choices you make. First you all need to eliminate any duplicate strategies. Then you want to remove the strategies that **don't** address the Best Outcome or will **never** work! You will need to give a reason why you believe this."

**OVERHEAD:** Facilitator displays **overhead** of **Best Outcome Statement** for reference during the activity.

**ACTIVITY:** **Selection of Strategies Activity**

Facilitator guides discussion and helps participants select all the strategies that the group actually thinks could be implemented. Discard the strategies that have been eliminated. If possible, group the remaining strategies into similar themes such as "addressing teacher needs", "transportation concerns", "activities to help children transition", etc.

On another wall or board, put up three large pieces of paper (paper the size of a large tablet). At the top of the first paper write "TOP DRAWER", on the second paper write "MIDDLE DRAWER", and on the last paper write "BOTTOM DRAWER". You will refer to these sheets for the next activity.

"Now we want to prioritize these strategies in terms of their importance to the transition process, and how likely they can be managed and implemented. Think of a chest of drawers. Usually when we organize our clothes or "other stuff" we place the most important or frequently used items in the top drawer. The middle drawer holds items we need less often, and the bottom drawer is opened even less frequently.

"Let's look at these strategies in these terms. The strategies which seem most important, most accessible and most feasible will go in the TOP DRAWER. These will be used in the next 6 months-1 year. The strategies that can most likely be implemented in the next 1-2 years will be in the MIDDLE DRAWER, and those you think may be addressed in the next 3-5 years will be put in the BOTTOM DRAWER. As a group we need to come to agreement as to which drawer these strategies belong. Think about how difficult it will be to use these ideas in relation to how important they are for addressing the BEST OUTCOME. Let's work together now to decide where to place these strategies."

**DISCUSSION:** Facilitator will guide discussion. When group decides in which drawer the strategy should go, take that card and stick it on the appropriate sheet (TOP, MIDDLE, BOTTOM). You may want one of the participants to help you. The TOP DRAWER sheet will probably have no more than 6-10 strategies. Help the group to not overload this category, and remind them to keep in mind that these are strategies that can be implemented without too much difficulty.

When all the strategies are distributed among the sheets, remove the MIDDLE DRAWER and BOTTOM DRAWER papers. For the last activity, have the group concentrate on strategies on the TOP DRAWER sheet and they will develop a plan of action.

**OVERHEAD AND DISCUSSION**

Facilitator shows **overhead** of **Effectiveness Indicators** as means for discussion of appropriateness of strategies.

Discuss each point with participants as it relates to the strategies, and help group come to agreement about focus and viability of each strategy. "When" to implement the strategies and "who" owns the plan will be discussed in next activity. The group may decide to reframe and rewrite some of the strategies to match the "Indicators". This discussion may take 15-20 minutes. You may want one of the participants to take charge of rewriting.

The next activity will help the group develop the PLAN OF ACTION to determine WHO will implement the strategies, WHEN they will be implemented, and the CRITERIA for completion of the tasks.

**ACTIVITY:** **Implementation of Strategies Activity**

Divide the large group into three smaller groups. Make sure each group has representation by parents, teachers, administrators and other providers. Each group will work on a different problem. Facilitator tells participants:

"The first group will generate ideas for WHO WILL BE primarily RESPONSIBLE for coordinating and overseeing the accomplishment of each strategy. Think of several people within this workshop, or in the community. The responsibility needs to be shared if this is to be a COMMUNITY TRANSITION PLAN. You can also think of who may be the best person to be the COORDINATOR for the entire plan".

"The second group will work on the TIMELINE: WHEN should the community start working on the tasks and IN WHAT ORDER should they be addressed. In other words, what comes first, second, third and so on. Some may occur simultaneously."

"The last group will discuss the CRITERIA which would show how you will know the task has been completed. Are you doing what you said you would do. Some attention should be given to how much time you think it will take to complete each strategy."

"When we get together in the large group, we will share these ideas and come to a consensus. This information will be put into a timeline on an overhead. By the end of this discussion you will have a PLAN OF ACTION and a COORDINATOR for the plan."

The small group discussion will take 15-20 minutes. When the small groups come back together, the facilitator will help the group come to agreement about the TIMELINE. This discussion may also take up to 20 minutes. Write appropriate information on overhead of the "Timeline". Facilitator can share other examples of timelines as overheads and handouts.

"Now that you have established an initial timeline, you need to set a time for this group to meet in the next month, or two months. At this meeting you will be able to assess progress, identify barriers and take time to brainstorm solutions to any roadblocks. Another task will be to design a formal way to get feedback from the individuals participating in the Community Transition Plan, so this group can evaluate how the plan is working."

The facilitator will get a commitment for the next meeting and a meeting place. The group can decide if everyone in this group needs to attend, or other individuals should be invited to attend.

**OVERHEADS AND HANDOUTS**

Facilitator will show **overhead** of **Timeline** and give **handout** of same. After recording information from discussion on overhead, facilitator will have another participant record the same information on handout (such as the COMMUNITY TRANSITION PLAN COORDINATOR).

Facilitator can show other examples of different kinds of timelines to keep track of the tasks, who is responsible and progress.

**MINI-LECTURE AND SUMMARY**

During these last two days, you all have explored the impact of transitioning from one program to another on the child, the family and the community program providers. Out of these experiences, and discussions, this group has developed a Community Transition Plan. Today you will leave with an action plan to implement some of the strategies you have chosen to facilitate a smooth transition process for your community. This is only the first step.

The Community Transition Plan is a fluid process, and sensitive to the needs and concerns of your community. As tasks are completed, and evaluated, you will continue to refine your plan. You will examine more long-term objectives (those in the MIDDLE and BOTTOM DRAWERS). You will incorporate more participants in the plan who can be involved in carrying out these strategies. What will be important will be open and clear communication, and people in the community who have the time, energy and interest to oversee the process.

This workshop has given your community an opportunity to come together to develop a plan for transitioning from Early Intervention to other programs that meet the needs of 3 and 4 year-old children with special needs and their families. It is only a first step, but with the combined support and efforts of all of you, other families and community providers, you now have a framework for enhancing your plan. This format can be used for developing plans for other transitions as well (i.e. from public school to the community, from hospital to home or school).

We will be contacting you in two or three months for feedback and support. Let's review the plan one more time, to make sure everyone understands the timeline and who will be responsible for coordinating and carrying out the strategies. (Review **overhead**.) Are there any other questions? (Facilitate discussion.)

Thank you for inviting us to work with you!

## TRAINING MATERIALS

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# TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SCHOOL FOR FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

***HANDOUTS:***

Questionnaire On Transition For Administrators, Teachers and Therapists

Questionnaire on Transition for Parents

Transitions

Transition Feedback Form

Sample Timelines

**Questionnaire On Transition**
**For**
**Administrators, Teachers, & Therapists**

1. Who serves the three- and four-year-old children with special needs in your community?
   Who serves children birth to three?

2. How are children transitioned . . . ?

3. Who is involved in this process? Any other schools or agencies?

4. Give an example, or describe step-by-step how this move takes place.
   Can you give a timeline for this? or <u>When</u> should each of these steps occur?

5. Is this process different for a child entering the system for the first time (newly identified)? In what ways?

6. Are there specific steps (in transition) that have been most helpful; useful?

7. What concerns, or roadblocks have there been?

8. How are parents involved? How are teachers involved?

9. Describe the assessment/testing process.

10. How are children usually placed in classrooms?

11. What suggestions or ideas do you have to improve this process?

12. Who would be most helpful to be on a community transition task force?

**Questionnaire On Transition**
**For**
**Parents**

1. Who serves the three- and four-year-old children with special needs in your community?
   Who serves children birth to three?

2. How was <u>your</u> child moved from one program to another?

3. Who is involved in this process? Any other schools or agencies?

4. Give an example, or describe step-by-step how this move takes place.
   Can you give a timeline for this? or <u>When</u> should each of these steps occur?

5. Is this process different for a child entering the system for the first time (newly identified)? In what ways?

6. Are there specific steps (in transition) that have been most helpful, useful?

7. What concerns, or roadblocks have there been?

8. How are parents involved? How are teachers involved?

9. Describe the assessment/testing process?

10. How was your child placed? When?

11. What would have made it easier for your child and family?

12. Who would be most helpful to be on a community transition task force?

# TRANSITIONS

**TRANSITION is defined as "a passing from one condition or place to another". Transition involves change which involves separation. Rita Warren (1977) says "separation is something we all deal with throughout life, form relatively minor losses, like friends moving away, to the ultimate separation, death. How we handle separations is developed very early in life, literally from our Peek-A-Boo days when we first deal with disappearance and reappearance of someone we love. How we help children handle separation, then, is of the first importance and is truly life-shaping."**

## TRANSITIONS FOR FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

* Birth of a child
* When the baby comes home form the hospital
* Initial diagnosis and prognosis of a problem or lack of diagnosis/prognosis
* Rehospitalization
* Expected time for achieving developmental milestones
* Intervention or treatment
* Transition to school

## TRANSITION FEEDBACK FORM

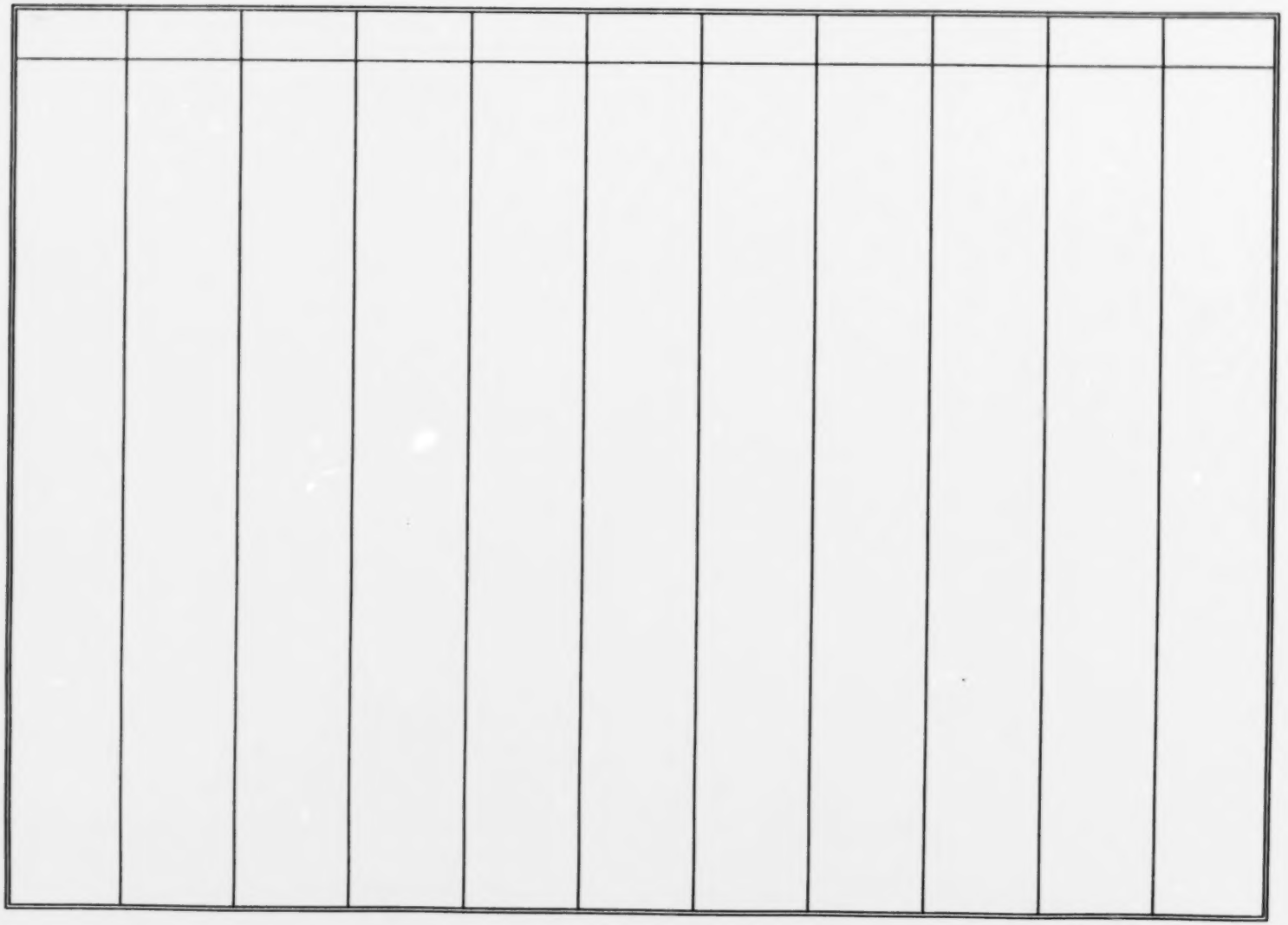
THOUGHTS

BEHAVIORS

FEELINGS

OTHERS' PERCEPTIONS
(Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors)

## TIMELINE



## TIMELINE

| TOPICS | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Screening | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Referral | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Transition Meetings for Parents | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Evals | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Staffings | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Observation by Parents | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Observation by Receiving School | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I. E. P. Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Follow-up | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |

## FAMILY TRANSITION TIMELINE

| RECOMMENDED TIMELINE | DATE TO BE ACCOMPLISHED | WHO IS RESPONSIBLE | STEPS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 - 12 months in advance | _____ | _____ | Talk to parents to inform them that their child will be changing programs in the fall, or at another specific time. |
| 6 - 9 months in advance | _____ | _____ | Find out what program choices are available for the children who will be changing programs. |
| 6 - 9 months in advance | _____ | _____ | Find out what support services may be available (e.g., therapy, counseling, transportation). |
| 9 months in advance | _____ | _____ | Learn the procedure for having children evaluated for public school or other possible services. |
| 6 - 9 months in advance | _____ | _____ | Determine the children to be evaluated. |
| 6 - 9 months in advance and on-going | _____ | _____ | Inform parents about program choices, support services available, and evaluation procedures. |
| 6 - 9 months in advance | _____ | _____ | Refer children for evaluation and possible special education services in public school. |
| 6 - 12 months in advance | _____ | _____ | Prepare children by teaching readiness skills (e.g., toileting, responding to a bell, sitting in a large group). |
| 3 - 4 months in advance | _____ | _____ | Visit potential programs/classrooms/playgrounds. Encourage parents to visit potential programs. Take the children on a fieldtrip to a public school; visit a school cafeteria and playground. |

# TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SCHOOL FOR FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

***OVERHEADS:***

Transitions

Transition Feedback Form

Transitions For Families Of Young Children With Special Needs

Transition Circles

Best Outcomes

Best Outcome Statement

Effectiveness Indicators

Sample Timelines

Rules Of Controlled Brainstorming

Problem Solving

## TRANSITIONS

TRANSITION is defined as "a passing from one condition or place to another". Transition involves change which involves separation. Rita Warren (1977) says "separation is something we all deal with throughout life, form relatively minor losses, like friends moving away, to the ultimate separation, death. How we handle separations is developed very early in life, literally from our Peek-A-Boo days when we first deal with disappearance and reappearance of someone we love. How we help children handle separation, then, is of the first importance and is truly life-shaping."

# TRANSITION FEEDBACK FORM

THOUGHTS

BEHAVIORS

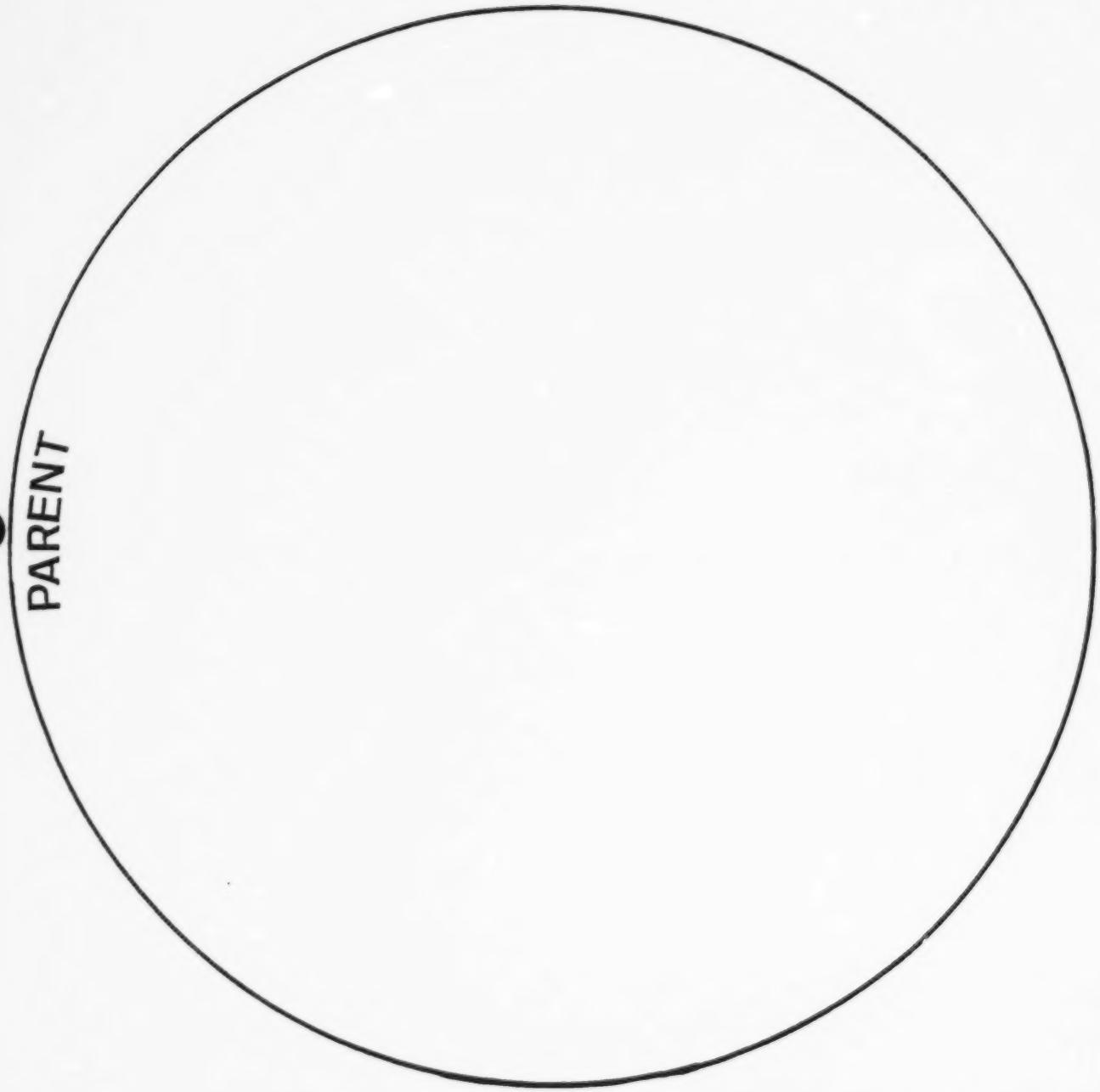
FEELINGS

OTHERS' PERCEPTIONS
(Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors)

# TRANSITIONS FOR FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

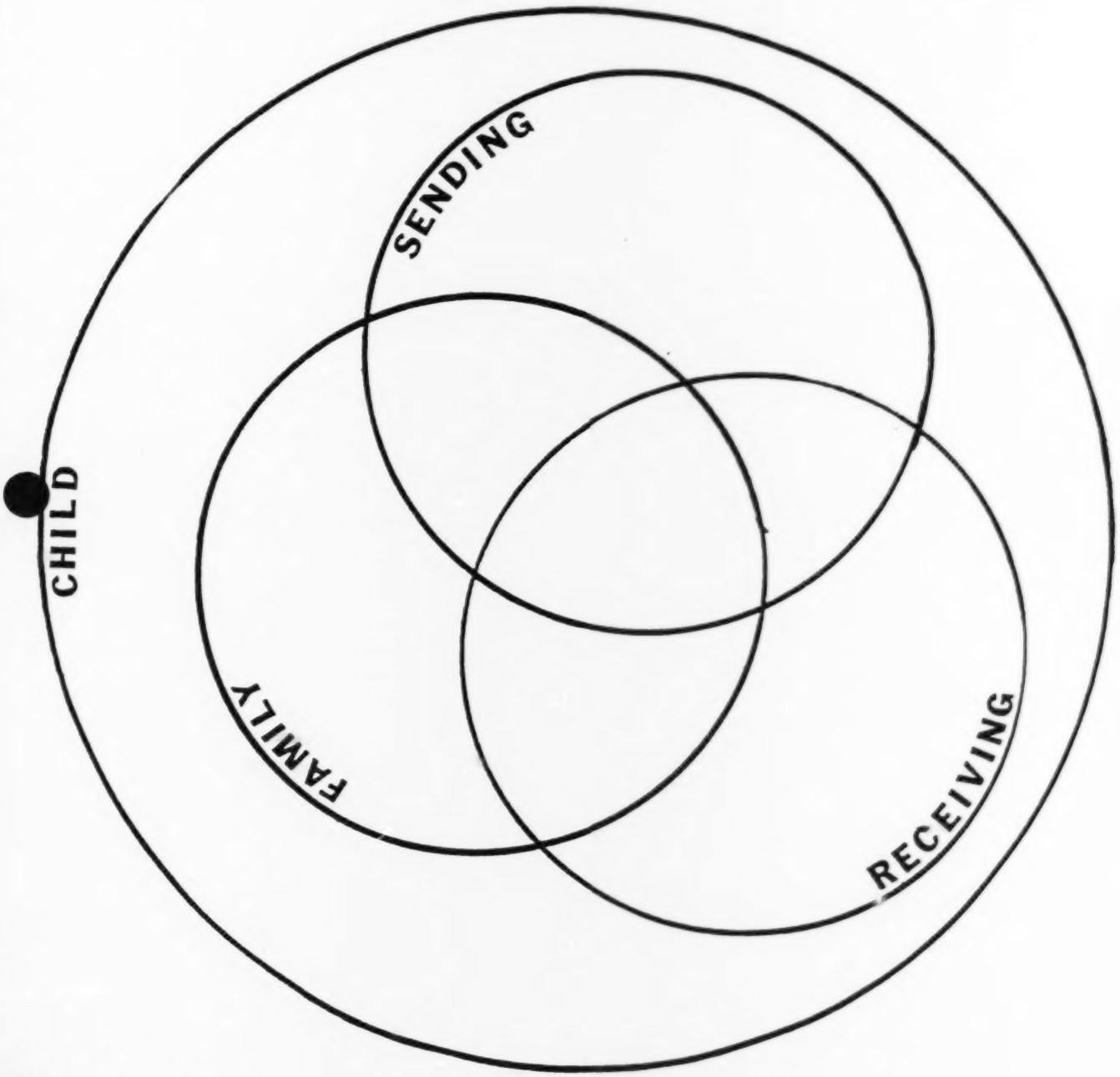
* Birth of a child
* When the baby comes home form the hospital
* Initial diagnosis and prognosis of a problem or lack of diagnosis/prognosis
* Rehospitalization
* Expected time for achieving developmental milestones
* Intervention or treatment
* Transition to school

CHILD


PARENT

SENDING SCHOOL

RECEIVING SCHOOL


CHILD
SENDING
FAMILY
RECEIVING

# BEST OUTCOMES - KEY ISSUES

* Formalized structure for transition process
  - sequence events
  - set a timeline

* Transition Package - have pitch at different levels
  - parent - at different levels of understanding
  - professional

* Have meetings prior to assessments
  - increased involvement with all players
  - collaboration regarding results/information (exchange information)

* Collaboration among parents, sending/receiving schools/agencies on completing evaluation process to determine placements

* For <u>transition</u> - have family-centered philosophy that is actually in place, not on paper

* Schedules visits or parent meetings to discuss service options

* Feedback loop from receiving agency to sending agencies about child

## BEST OUTCOMES continued...

* Formalized structure to interact and share information about specific child issues to help in transition process - FACE-TO-FACE

* Comprehensive specific plans to work with families at each step and between steps - involve people who may later be involved with child

* Have KEY PERSON to help parents know process, go with them at every step - - not agency specific person, has sense of whole picture - - i.e. CASE MANAGER

* Timelines set between agencies -- expectations that things will be done, when said they will be done

## BEST OUTCOME

Comprehensive formal fluid/flexible transition process

* adopt "family-centered" philosophy

* foster "collaboration" between parents and professionals ("sending" and "receiving" schools/agencies)

* develop sequence of transition procedures

* encourage process that resembles traditional (natural) transitions for all children

# BEST OUTCOMES STATEMENT

## EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS

Is the child the focus?

Are the wants and needs of each role addressed?

Are the strengths and richness of the community being utilized and expanded?

Have you established strategies that ensure on-going collaboration and communication?

Have you taken into consideration <u>when</u> to implement strategies?

Do your strategies improve access to information for <u>all</u> involved?

WHO OWNS THE PLAN?

TIMELINE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## TIMELINE

| TOPICS | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
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| Transition Meetings for Parents | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Staffings | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Observation by Receiving School | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I. E. P. Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| 6 - 9 months in advance | _____ | _____ | Refer children for evaluation and possible special education services in public school. |
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| 3 - 4 months in advance | _____ | _____ | Visit potential programs/classrooms/playgrounds. Encourage parents to visit potential programs. Take the children on a fieldtrip to a public school; visit a school cafeteria and playground. |

# RULES OF CONTROLLED BRAINSTORMING

1. GIVE A STRICT SUBJECT DEFINITION
2. ESTABLISH A TIME LIMIT
3. CRAZINESS IS ENCOURAGED
4. PIGGYBACKING IS ENCOURAGED
5. QUANITITY IS VALUED OVER QUALITY
6. NEGATIVE FEEDBACK IS NOT ALLOWED
7. POSITIVE FEEDBACK IS NOT ALLOWED
8. NO EXPLANATIONS DURING THE BRAINSTORMING SESSION - RESERVE TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS LATER

# PROBLEM SOLVING

1. IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

2. CONSIDER DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS OF THE PROBLEM

3. IDENTIFY OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

4. DEVELOP STRATEGIES

5. PUT STRATEGIES INTO ACTION

6. EVALUATE SOLUTIONS

Render, M., Krehbiel, R. & Sheldon, P. Transition: Preschool to Public School - Helping Children, Parents, and Teachers.

# TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SCHOOL FOR FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

***BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR FACILITATOR:***

Facilitator's Guide

## FACILITATOR GUIDE

### *How To Lead A Group*

An effective facilitator leads the group in such a way that members feel they share common concerns. In an atmosphere of mutuality, group members feel accepted when they raise problems. They feel, too, a willingness to listen, empathize, and learn from other members of their group.

An effective facilitator recognizes that group members learn best from each other, particularly if the content relates to that which a member has used successfully. Most participants become willing to consider new ideas when they can release feelings about their own experiences.

At the start of the workshop, participants may hesitate to share personal feelings and experiences. Facilitators can reduce some of the group's tenseness with appropriate humor and a relaxed attitude. They can help relax the group also by describing common difficulties of child-rearing or personal experiences.

If you believe that it's more important to be an effective listener and facilitator than it is to have a precisely correct answer, you will realize that you need not be the expert in order to facilitate this workshop.

### *Principles Of Leadership*

Facilitators bring their personal beliefs and values to the group. They are effective group leaders who conduct workshops according to the following principles:

1. Leaders are sensitive to the potentially encouraging forces in a group and lead the group in a way which promotes cooperation and cohesiveness.

2. Leaders believe in the ability of people to grow and change. Leaders are not involved in gratifying themselves, but in encouraging the growth of group members.

3. Leaders provide experiences which allow group members to recognize their own assets. They avoid the role of expert or authority.

4. Leaders are concerned with developing an atmosphere of mutual trust and encouragement among group members.

Effective leaders will not possess all these desirable traits - no one does. But they will not be discouraged by their imperfections, either. They will proceed as well as they can, alert to ways they can improve.

***Six Facilitator Skills***

The following skills of leadership can help each discussion be productive:

1. **Structuring** sets the purpose and goals of the group and the procedures of the workshop.

This workshop is not merely open discussion, nor is it family therapy. It does NOT focus on intensive discussion of individual problems.

Structuring requires the leader to be continuously aware of what is happening and to determine whether it is within the purposes of the group. The leader who structures well senses when it is appropriate to permit latitude in discussions and when it is prudent to draw boundaries.

2. **Universalizing** is the process whereby a leader helps group members become aware that their questions and concerns are shared by others.

If the members are to work together and to feel concern for each other, they must learn to listen to each other and discover that their concerns are not unique, but often common experiences.

Group cohesion is promoted by a simple strategy: the leader is asking what others think about a presented problem. After hearing a question or a puzzled comment, the facilitator may ask, "Has anyone else wondered about that? Has anyone else had difficulty trying to . . .? " As responses come forth, listeners recognize they are not isolated in their feelings, questions or concerns.

3. **Linking** is the identification of common elements. It is a skill which requires a leader to listen carefully to the questions and comments expressed in the group.

As thoughts and feelings are expressed, listen for themes which are similar - but which may not have been recognized as such by other group members. Linking clarifies communication by helping members see that they have similar feelings or beliefs. Point out similarities or differences; for example, "Mary gets very discouraged when she tries to talk to her parents about her daughter Christine's special needs. Her parents say, "Don't worry, she'll grow out of it." Do you remember what Sue said about talking to her parents? Do you see any similarity between the two problems?"

4. **Feedback** is the process whereby a person gets reactions from members of the group concerning what he or she has just said or done. Feedback enables a person to understand how she or he is being perceived by others.

The effective leader recognizes the value of feedback, points out its function in the group, and shows how it works by "feeding back" information to group members and clarifying what has happened. Saying to a member, "Your tone of voice sounds like you're angry and your description of Bobby's classroom makes me think your very dissatisfied - is that what you feel?"

Feedback does not demand a change; it only shares an observation. It must be done in a spirit of mutual respect and caring. Any decision to change rests with the receiver.

5. **Focusing on the positive** actions of people gives members encouragement and leads them to encourage each other. Encouragement is a necessary skill for a parent; therefore, it should be practiced in the group.

6. **Summarizing** helps members to understand ideas, procedures, and attitudes that have been expressed and to integrate what they have learned. The summary is verbal, not written, so all may benefit from the exchange.

A summary may deal with the content of the meeting, the feelings of members, or with the level of their involvement. Group members can be asked to summarize at appropriate times. The facilitator needn't wait until the end of the workshop to help clarify the outcomes of the workshop.

***Answering Questions***

A question comes up. It's directed to the facilitator. What does the facilitator do?

First, get other group members to think about the question. To the group, say something such as, "What do you think about that? How would you have handled that?" By doing so, you will tap the wisdom of the group and "universalize" the problem posed by the question.

Redirecting a question not only stimulates, involves, and brings the group together; it also demonstrates a facilitator's faith and belief in people's ability to find their own answers.

The difference between effective and ineffective helpers lies in their basic beliefs about people. Effective helpers believe that:

People are <u>able</u>, not unable. They have the capacity to solve their problems.

People are <u>friendly</u>, not unfriendly. They expect a reciprocal relationship.

People are <u>worthy</u>, not unworthy. They possess dignity which must be respected.

People are basically <u>internally</u>, not <u>externally</u>, motivated. They are creative and motivated from within.

People are <u>dependable</u>, not hindering. They are sources of satisfaction and enhancement.

A facilitator must genuinely hold these beliefs about people if the facilitator expects to encourage psychological growth. It is impossible to "sell" a democratic approach if one is authoritative and displays a lack of trust or acceptance in group meetings.

An effective facilitator must also project an impression of self-confidence. This rests upon a belief that one is adequate to meet the responsibilities and challenges of life. It comes from knowing that one is acceptable, likable, and able to bring about a positive response from people. A feeling of personal adequacy allows one to feel that sense of self-esteem which comes from being identified with others rather than alienated from them.

A feeling of personal adequacy also gives a facilitator something else - the courage to be imperfect. For this workshop, you do not have to feel that you must handle each situation perfectly. Because you believe in yourself, you are free to believe in others and in the power of the group.

### *A Common Problem For The Facilitator*

Even experienced group facilitators encounter difficulties. Many of these problems can be traced to a common denominator: the participant who resists - knowingly or unknowingly - what the rest of the group is trying to accomplish.

Communicating honestly and directly is not easy. When we feel unsure of ourselves, we may defend ourselves by "playing games."

People who play "Monopoly" believe they must be the center of attention. They become concerned whenever they are not the focus of discussion. These people have a number of purposes for monopolizing a group. Aside from enjoying the attention of other members, they develop strategies for controlling and contesting the position of the leader.

To lessen the influence of a monopolizer, you might say "I'm getting concerned that time is going fast and we need to move on to other things. If there's time later, we can come back to this." Then move on.

Adapted by Project Ta-kós from Systematic Training For Effective Parenting (STEP) *Leader's Guide* by Don Dinkmeyer and Gary McKay; © 1976; American Guidance Servicem Inc., Circle Pines, Minn. 55014. Permission to adapt and reprint granted by publisher. All rights reserved.

## RESOURCES

The following books can be obtained from Alta Mira Specialized Family Services; P.O. Box 7040; Albuquerque, New Mexico 87149.

Weinberg, N., Askew, L., Coleman, L., Holtzclaw, E. & Render, M. (1989). Transition to School: A Handbook for Parents.

Render, M., Krehbiel, R. & Sheldon, P. (1984). Transition: Preschool to Public School-Helping Children, Parents and Teachers.